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RAPHAEL AND MICHAEL ANGELO.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF HERMANN GRIMM, BY IDA M. ELIOT.

After finishing the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel, he took up again his other art, for the sake of the monument, and in the following years we find a new element which renders his life less sad. He learned to know Vittoria Colonna, the woman who was at that time the most renowned princess in Italy. Besides letters and poems which passed between the two, we have the account of an eye-witness who saw them together and heard them talk.

About the year 1540 Francesco d'Ollanda, a portrait painter in the service of the King of Portugal, visited Italy, and was acquainted with Michael Angelo as well as Vittoria. The manuscript containing the account of his journey, written to the King, was discovered in Lisbon by Count Raczynsky, and extracts were published in Portugal in a book on art. From this French version I translate a few fragments into German.

"While I was thus spending my time in Rome," writes Francesco, "one day I visited Messer Lattantio Tollomei, who, through the friendly mediation of Bosio, Secretary to the Pope, had made me acquainted with Michael Angelo. Lattantio stands in high esteem, not only on account of his native nobility, but because he is nephew to the Pope. He was not at home, but had left word that he would wait for me at *Monte Cavallo*, in the church of San Silvestro, where he, with the Marchioness of Pescara, was listening to a lecture on Paul's Epistles. This Marchioness of Pescara—Vittoria Colonna, sister of Ascanius Colonna, is one of the most celebrated ladies in all Italy or Europe, in other words, in the whole world. The purity of her character, her beauty, her knowledge of the ancient languages, her intellect—in a word, all the virtues which adorn a woman and may be mentioned in her praise, cause her to take this high position. Since the death of her husband she lives in modest retirement. Having satisfied her desire for splendor during her former brilliant life, now she gives herself up wholly to the love of Divine things and to doing good, comes as a help to poor women, and lives as an example of true Christian

piety. I owe my acquaintance with her also to the goodness of Lattantio, one of her warmest friends.

"She begged me to be seated, and when the reading and explanations were finished, she turned towards me and Lattantio. 'I may be mistaken,' she said, 'but it seems to me as if the Master Francesco would more willingly have heard Michael Angelo speak upon painting than Fra Antonio give a reading.'

"That vexed me. 'My lady,' I said, 'your Excellency must needs assume that I understand only what concerns the art of painting. True it would be very pleasant to me to hear Michael Angelo speak, but if one is to talk about the passages from Paul I prefer Fra Antonio.'"

Here I interrupt the account. His memoirs seem to be a natural and certainly truthful account of his experiences, and the style of the recorded conversation is not dull, although a little prolix—a style not peculiar to him, but universally adopted and admired at that time. We have numerous "*raggionamenti*" from the Italy and a great many conversations from the Germany of that time. To-day one addresses the public directly, but at that time it was the custom to personify the public, and then write out the controversy. The arguments of the learned schools, the oral discussions taking place in every station of life, the model of the Platonic Dialogues, all these, taken together, gave to literature this form as a very common one. If, then, our Portuguese describes details in a circumstantial manner, and takes pleasure in emphasizing little points, it may not be so much owing to his acute power of observation and his good memory as it is the result of skill acquired in the use of that literary form. What he writes must not be considered as a short-hand report, but the events described are certainly not false or altered.

His own character is shown with considerable clearness. Unconsciously he states things so that they make him appear in a favorable light. One learns him by seeing what vexes him and about what things he gives sharp answers. He often says with emphasis that he could have become acquainted with many celebrated people, had he so wished. Notwithstanding this, he takes great care to tell us whenever he did meet any noted person. He shows himself to be one of those good-hearted, narrow-minded, but sensitive natures, who, perhaps, most of all, enjoy life, and

know how to satisfy their vanity in an innocent and open fashion.

Thus he had been at once touched by Vittoria's remark. "‘Don't be disturbed by that,’ broke in Lattantio; ‘the Marchioness certainly did not mean to say that, because one understands painting, for that reason he can understand nothing else: we, in Italy, place art too high to think so. But perhaps what the Marchioness said was suggested by her intention of procuring for us, besides the enjoyment already obtained, another delight—that of hearing Michael Angelo speak.’

"‘If that was so,’ I answered, ‘then her Excellency has vouchsafed me no unusual favor, for I know too well that she is accustomed to give much more than one has dared to ask.’

"The Marchioness smiled. She called one of her people, and turning to me, said, ‘One must enjoy giving to him who knows how to be grateful, but to-day I shall have, in giving, no less joy than Francesco will have in receiving.’

"‘Go,’ she said, to the servant, ‘into Michael Angelo's house, and tell him that I and Messer Lattantio are here, that it is beautifully cool here in the church, and that we are sitting quite alone with the doors closed. Ask him whether he would not like to spend a little of his valuable time with us here, so that we might be so much the gainers. But do not say a single word about Master Francesco's being here.’

"I admired the way in which the Marchioness knew how to manage details so gracefully, and whispered this remark to Lattantio. She asked what we were saying to each other.

"‘Oh,’ said Lattantio, ‘he merely remarked how wisely your Excellency always managed, as, for example, in sending this message. For while Francesco knows only too well that Michael Angelo belongs more to him than to me, yet, before they have met, Michael Angelo will do his best to avoid him. They may not be able to separate after they become acquainted.’

"‘I know Michael Angelo too well,’ said the Marchioness, ‘for me not to have known this. Meanwhile, how shall we manage to persuade him to talk about painting when we succeed in getting him here?’

"Fra Ambrosio, from Siena, one of the most celebrated ministers of the Pope, had until now spoken no word. ‘I think that

is worthy of consideration,' he said. 'Michael Angelo knows that the gentleman from Spain is an artist, and will hardly agree to speak about his art. I believe it would be best for the gentleman to hide himself somewhere so that he could listen.'

"'It would perhaps be harder than you think to hide the "gentleman from Spain" away from Michael Angelo's sight,' I answered the reverend man, a little bitterly. 'For, even were I hidden, he would still perceive my presence even better than you through your glasses can see me standing here. Only wait until he comes, and see if I have not spoken truly.'

"The Marchioness and Lattantio laughed, but for my part I did not join, nor did Ambrosio, who might have learned from this that he would find in me more than a mere painter.

"After a few moments of silence there was a knock at the door. Every one feared that it was some one else than the Master, who lived quite under Monte Cavallo. Luckily, however, the servant of the Marchioness met him close by San Silvestro. Michael Angelo was going to the springs, and came through the Esquiline street, talking with his color-grinder, Urbino. So he fell right into the trap, and it was he who knocked at the door.

"The Marchioness rose to receive him. She remained standing for awhile, then she begged him to be seated between herself and Messer Lattantio. Then she began to speak. Unconsciously she added dignity to those whom she addressed and to the place where she was. With an art that cannot be described nor imitated she spoke of one thing after another. She did it with as much earnestness as grace. She merely touched upon painting, so that afterwards she could draw the great artist more securely. She managed like a general who does not try to storm the fortress, but attempts to take it by surprise. But Michael Angelo saw the ruse, and guarded his walls by well-posted sentinels. He knew how to neutralize her attacks by every kind of counter-action, but at last she conquered, and truly, I do not know who could have held out any longer.

"'It is a known fact,' she said, 'that one is always wholly conquered if one dares to attack Michael Angelo in his own kingdom—that of finesse. And you see, Messer Lattantio, there is only one way of conquering and silencing him—one must speak of law-suits or of painting.'

"Suddenly he turned upon me with astonishment. 'Pardon me, Meister Francesco, for not having seen you before. I saw no one except the Marchioness. But since God ordains that you are here, then come to my aid as a colleague.'

"'You give too good an excuse for me not to pardon you,' I answered. 'But it seems as if the Marchioness with one and the same light has produced two very different effects, as the rays of the sun at the same time harden one thing and melt another. The sight of her has made you blind for me, but I see and hear you only because I see the Marchioness. Besides, I know that a man of taste must feel himself so occupied when in the presence of her Excellency that he has no thoughts left for a neighbor. And since it is so, I shall not now feel constrained to follow the advice of a certain priest.'

"The company laughed again at this reply. Fra Ambrosio rose, took leave of the Marchioness, greeted us, and went away. He remained one of my best friends afterwards."

Here ends the first chapter of the account.

I will make one remark before I begin the second. The Marchioness had said that one must speak with Michael Angelo either of painting or of lawsuits. The word lawsuit throws a significant light upon the letter from the artist to Pope Paul III., in which he sets forth in detail all the wrongs he has suffered from the beginning. He was one of those geniuses who, on account of their intellectual wealth, are cut off from practical affairs, are led to make a thousand promises through their good nature, and are imposed upon by people. All at once they see what they have come to, grow angry, and insist upon their rights. Their neglect of practical matters is now very troublesome to them. Everything ought to be as they have planned it, but strict justice will not permit it. Michael Angelo confessed openly in one of his letters that, unfortunately, he had followed no method in his affairs. The very ones who look with horror upon every lawsuit at such times are the most eager to employ courts, so as to appear as innocent in the eyes of the business world as they know they are to themselves. That letter which people have considered as the production of some unknown defender is nothing but the outbreak of feelings excited in this way.

We have a charming description of the Marchioness, who was

very conscious of her influence over Michael Angelo, and who exercised this power in the most graceful manner. The friendship between these two is well known in history. Vittoria was of an age when love and friendship need not be in opposition in a woman's heart, and in hers they united in forming a feeling which was equally removed from coldness and from passion. But both reverence and passionate devotion speak from the poems which Michael Angelo wrote to her. Her letters to him are still in existence, unprinted, at Florence, in possession of the Buonarotti family. He complained that he was separated from her, and wrote altogether too often, she thought; so she asked him once to write less often. She said that his letters caused her to be late at the evening service in the chapel of St. Catherine, and they must keep him in the morning from beginning his work at St. Peter's.

Throughout her letter there is expressed such confidence in her friend, and such high appreciation of his love, that this repulse meant to him no real discouragement, nor a desire for his departure.

Vittoria never came to Rome or to the neighborhood without going to see him, and often she came merely to see him. He openly declared what he owed to her; that she had entirely changed and transformed him.

Vittoria Colonna was born in the year 1490. In 1509 she married the Marquis of Pescara, who often was obliged to leave her when he went to war. When alone, she longed for his presence, and in this way her first sonnets were written. They had no children. In 1525 he died. She came to Rome, and was there during the troubles of the following year, which were harder for her to bear because her own family, that of the Colonnas, were the most to blame in this affair. She entered the cloister of San Silvestro, where she wrote many of her poems, but she soon left it. In 1536 she became acquainted with Michael Angelo.

She was at that time forty-six years old; Michael Angelo was sixty-two. While he was a man whose youth was not affected by his years, so, on the other hand, Vittoria Colonna's beauty seems to have been imperishable. There are many portraits which bear her name, but not one of them has sufficiently authentic proof to be considered genuine. Her soft hair must have had a reddish

golden tinge. Poems which were written in her honor praise her beauty. In addition to this, let us imagine the beautiful figure, the queenly bearing, and the renown which was bestowed on her poems and her family. These were somewhat veiled by her giving up a life in the world, although she had none of that false belief that devotion to God requires that beauty and worth should be despised. Thinking of these things, we may imagine a woman at whose death a man like Michael Angelo might well lose control of himself through grief. Condivi describes how he stood at her deathbed in despair. She died in 1547. Afterwards, in his old age, he said that he repented of nothing more than that he did not at that time kiss her brow, instead of merely kissing her hands. Vittoria's death was as terrible a blow to him in his age as the fall of Florence was in his younger days.

Very few of his poems show evidence that they were written to Vittoria. But in a great many the sentiment is a proof that they were written while he was thinking of her. From her letters it appears that he sent to her at Viterbo the sonnet beginning

“Carico d'anni e di peccati pieno.”

It seems to me very natural that her name should not be mentioned in the deepest, most passionate verses. He loved her with his whole soul. It has been believed that, if the facts could be given, his relation towards her would be found to be a more ideal one—that he felt for her a so-called spiritual love, springing up from a sort of religious union of their hearts. It seems to me the nature of the man is opposed to this. Goethe in his old age was still roused (by the beauty of a maiden) into passionate feeling, which he poured forth in glowing lines. Michael Angelo's poems, in which he complains of Love because she has seized upon him so powerfully in his old age, need no artistic explanation; they cannot be transposed from the earth to the region of the clouds. He loved Vittoria; she forbade him to tell her so, but at the same time she did not hide the fact that she could never lay aside the veil which she had assumed at the death of her husband. If we suppose that the relation between them was different, a great many of his poems are unintelligible, while, taken naturally, they express his feeling very clearly.

I will quote one that has always touched me, not because it

expresses a passionate longing, but because it gives, in a calm and resigned tone, the most tender and spiritual flattery which could be given only in this way. He must have been talking with Vittoria about age, and how beauty passes with years. As a consolation, he sent her this sonnet. [This is in Symond's collection, headed "A Prayer to Nature."]

"That thy great beauty on our earth may be
 Shrined in a lady softer and more kind,
 I call on Nature to collect and bind
 All those delights the slow years steal from thee,
 And save them to restore the radiancy
 Of thy bright face in some fair form designed
 By Heaven; and may Love ever bear in mind
 To mould her heart of grace and courtesy;
 I call on Nature, too, to keep my sighs,
 My scattered tears to take and recombine,
 And give to him who loves that fair again.
 More happy he, perchance, shall move those eyes
 To mercy by the griefs wherewith I pine,
 Nor lose the kindness that from me is ta'en."

Another sonnet I refer to Vittoria. [In Symond's translation this sonnet is referred to Tommaso de' Cavalieri.]

"With your fair eyes a charming light I see,
 For which my own blind eyes would peer in vain;
 Stayed by your feet the burden I sustain,
 Which my lame feet find all too strong for me;
 Wingless, upon your pinions forth I fly—
 Heavenward your spirit stirreth me to strain;
 E'en as you will, I blush and blanch again—
 Freeze in the sun, burn 'neath a frosty sky.
 Your will includes and is the lord of mine;
 Life to my thoughts within your heart is given;
 My words begin to breathe upon your breath.
 Like to the moon am I that cannot shine
 Alone—for lo! our eyes see naught in heaven
 Save what the living sun illumineth."

Michael Angelo's poems were not published while he lived, except a few, of which his friends gained possession. I will quote only one more line. He carved a crucifix for Vittoria, and sent it to her with the words written:

"Non ci si pensa quanto sangue costa."

Among her poems I have found nothing which could have been dedicated to Michael Angelo.

Now let us go on with Francesco's story.

"The Marchioness spoke: 'His Holiness has had the goodness to allow me to build a nunnery. I wish to have it erected near this place, on the slope of Monte Cavallo, where the ruins of the portico stand, from which, according to the story, Nero looked down upon the burning city. The steps of holy women ought to wipe out the last traces of the bad man. I do not know, Michael Angelo, in what proportions I shall erect the building, nor upon which side would be the best entrance. Would it be impossible to combine our new edifice with the old remains still standing there, so that these might do us good service?' 'Certainly,' he answered, 'the ruined portico might be used as a bell-tower!' He answered so seriously, and with such conviction, that Messer Lattantio could not help remarking upon it. The great artist continued: 'Your Excellency can build a cloister in that place very satisfactorily, and when we leave here we can make a little *détour* that way; perhaps, when on the very spot, some useful suggestion may occur to us.'

"'I had not the courage to propose it to you,' said Vittoria, 'but I see that the saying of our Lord, *deponit potentes et exaltavit humiles*, is always true. Besides, you have the serviceable habit of giving us generously of your wisdom, while others are lavish of their ignorance. For this reason your friends hold your character in higher esteem than your works, and those who have not learned to know you personally prize what is of the least value only—your works. For my part, it seems to me worthy of the highest praise that you finish your works with such excellence, avoid useless talk, and refuse the requests of many princes who desire to possess something from your hand, so that, by concentrating your efforts, one perfect work is brought into existence.'

"'Madonna,' answered Michael Angelo, 'you give me more praise than I deserve, perhaps. But, since you have led me to the subject, permit me, in my own name, and in that of other artists whose character is like mine, as Meister Francesco, to lay before you a complaint against a portion of the public. Among numerous false rumors which are spread concerning the lives of celebrated masters, there is none that is so willingly believed as that

these men are eccentric in their behavior, and, if one tries to make their acquaintance, are repelling and uncompanionable. And yet these masters are only quite natural in their behavior. Silly men, however, not to mention a few who judge more reasonably, consider them fanciful and capricious. Nothing is farther from the character of a true artist than such a reproach. I agree that certain peculiarities of the painter can be developed only where painting abounds; that is, in the few countries like Italy, where it is in its most perfect state; but idle people are wholly unfair when they expect that an artist who is absorbed in his work will spend his valuable time in empty compliments on their account. Few enough paint conscientiously, but the people who blame a man because his highest aim is to finish his work in the most careful manner, neglect their duty in a higher degree than those artists who give themselves no trouble about their work. Great artists at times indulge in such behavior that it is useless to attempt to do anything with them; but it is not because they are proud, but because they seldom meet with a true appreciation on the part of others, or because they will not lower their superior minds by useless talk with people who have nothing to do, and who only drag them out of their deep train of reflections. I can assure your Excellency that even his Holiness is tiresome to me when he comes with the question of why I do not go oftener to the Vatican. When it is about some unimportant matter, I believe I can help him more by staying at home than by appearing in his presence. Then I tell him, without circumlocution, that I prefer to work for him in my own way to standing by him all day long, as so many others do.'

"'Happy Michael Angelo!' I exclaimed; 'of all princes the popes alone look upon this sin with indulgent eye.'

"'The very sins which princes should pardon first of all,' he continued; then, after a pause, he added, 'I may say, indeed, that the important things which have occupied me have gained for me such liberty that, in conversation with the Pope, unconsciously I have put on my felt hat and gone on talking quite unconcernedly. This was not sufficient to make him punish me; on the contrary, he let me live as I chose, and it was at these very times that my mind was the most eager to serve him. Should any one be foolish enough to place himself in solitude with his art, and, because he

finds pleasure in being alone, should give up his friends and turn all the world against him, then they would have the right to find fault with him. I, however, act in this way from my natural feeling, and because I am forced to it by my work, or because my character cannot endure formal courtesy, so that it would be the greatest injustice not to allow me to do as I choose, especially as I desire nothing from any one else. Why does the world demand that one should be interested in her empty pastimes? Does she not know that there are sciences which take such complete hold of a man that not the least part of his being is able to give itself up to these ways of killing time? If he has nothing to do, like you, then, for all me, he may die the death, if he does not observe your etiquette and ceremonies. But you seek him out only to do yourselves an honor, and it gives you the greatest pleasure that he is a man to whom popes and emperors give orders. I say that an artist who cares more for the demands of an ignorant people than for those of his art, whose personal conduct has no peculiarity or oddity, or who has a very slight reputation in that line, will never be a superior nature. Clumsy, ordinary men can be found in abundance, without using any lantern, on every street corner throughout the world.'

"Here Michael Angelo was silent, and the Marchioness rejoined, 'If the friends of whom you speak were in the least like those friends of antiquity, the evil could be better borne. When Apelles was lying ill, in the midst of poverty, Agesilas visited him secretly and put some money under his pillow. His old servant stood aghast when she found the money, but he said, laughing, "No one but Agesilas can have done this, and you need not be astonished at it."'

Let me insert here that Michael Angelo was not rich, though not the opposite. He always had a great many orders, and received large sums of money. For his Last Judgment alone he had a yearly payment of two thousand scudi.

"Next, Lattantio told us his ideas. 'Great painters,' he said, 'would exchange places with no other human beings. In their superiority they were satisfied with the small sum which they gained from their art. The genius of a great painter knows how empty are the lives and pleasures of the rich, who consider that they alone are powerful. Their names will go out of the world

with them, without their having had any intimation of those things which are the worthiest for men to know and to care for. Such men have never really lived. However much they have heaped together treasures, the genius gains for himself an undying name through his works. The world's fortune is not worth wishing for, as a whole or in part, and the reason that genius has respect for itself is because it breaks through the way which would not open for the desires of commonplace spirits, because they would not at all be able to perceive it. A ruler may well be less proud of the possession of his kingdom than an artist of the power of representing a single one of the created works of God. It is no easier for the ruler to conquer a formidable enemy than for the artist to execute a work which entirely corresponds to his idea. When the Emperor Maximilian pardoned a painter condemned to death, he said these memorable words: 'I can make counts and dukes; God alone can create a distinguished artist.'

"'Give me some advice, Messer Lattantio,' said the Marchioness, when he ended. 'Shall I ask Michael Angelo to clear up my thoughts a little in regard to painting? For, in order to prove to us that great men are reasonable and not governed by whims and fancies, it is to be hoped that he will play us at this time no trick, as he has formerly done.'

"'Madonna,' answered Lattantio, 'Master Michael Angelo ought always to make an exception in favor of your Excellency, and freely give to us those thoughts which he so rightly keeps hidden from the world.'

"'Your Excellency,' replied Michael Angelo, 'has but to command. Whatever seems to you worthy shall be laid at your feet. I am all obedience.'

"Smiling, Vittoria continued, 'Since we are now on such matters, I should like to know what you think of art in the Netherlands, for it seems to me to be on a more devout path than ours.'

"Now Michael Angelo began to express his ideas. All that he said was beautiful and just; but, since the book of the Count Raczynsky is to be had everywhere, I shall quote only a few sentences.

"'Good painting,' he said, 'is noble and devout in itself, for nothing can with more power elevate or excite a pure soul to

piety than the laborious striving after finished representation. It touches the divine and is one with it. Good painting is only a copy of its perfections, a shadow of its painting, a music, a melody; and only a very profound intelligence can always feel how great this work is. For this reason it is so seldom attained and so seldom brought to view.' ”

He now spoke of painting in different countries, and the works of art in Italy. Every word is striking, and the reading of the whole account, from which I have quoted here a few fragments only, would certainly be very useful to the lover of art. His last sentence, I think, is particularly fine. The Marchioness, as will be seen more clearly from what follows, in spite of the loftiness of her views, has insisted upon considering the subject of painting quite like an amateur. To her a devout picture is one which represents a holy subject: to him it is one which was painted when the artist devoutly yielded himself to the beauty of nature. “Only an artist can feel where piety is to be found. He may paint a flower in the hand of Mary with the same divine reverence that he paints her face, and he who pictures the suffering Christ, with eyes distorted by grief and forehead marked with swollen veins, is often infinitely farther off from the divine than he who knows how to give to a modest portrait of a child the breath of innocence which he has recognized and felt.”

A trace of the childlike is found in everything that Michael Angelo does. In this he is like Beethoven, who, obstinate as a lion, would suffer no opposition, and yet quietly resigned himself to fate, which treated him so harshly.

He expresses in his poems sorrow for a wasted life. Many times he renews his laments over years past unused, and he ends one of the many sonnets in which he pours out his despair with the proverb, repeated for ages by the wisest spirits, “He is the happiest whose death follows nearest to his birth.”

“Ah, woe is me, alas! when I revolve
My years gone by, wearied, I find not one
Wherein to call a single day my own.
Fallacious hopes, desires as vain, and thoughts
Of love compounded and of love's woes—
(No mortal joy has novelty for me),
Make up the sum: I know—I feel 'tis so,

Thus have I ever strayed from Truth and Good :
 Where'er I go, shifting from right to left,
 Denser the shades, less bright the sun appears,
 And I, infirm and worn, am nigh to fall."

He may have written this after Vittoria's death. We feel that now he was entirely alone. But, while that thought lay deep in his consciousness, he was still the old master among artists, and carried on his works with power. These were extended over a wider field than ever. In 1540 Pietro di San Gallo died, and to Michael Angelo was given the chief direction of the building of St. Peter's. At first he made the excuse that he was no architect, but finally, when the Pope commanded, instead of requesting him, he accepted the office. Dr. Guhl gives the letters written on the subject. In them Michael Angelo does full justice to his old enemy Bramante. Besides this occupation, besides his painting, besides his sculpture, he is occupied whenever there is any building going on. Gates, churches, bridges, fortresses, palaces, must be erected according to his specifications.

Cosmo de Medici, Grand-duke of Tuscany, who tried in vain to persuade the great man to return to his fatherland, never attempted any important building without submitting the plans to him. Once, in the year 1555, after the death of Julius III., who had succeeded Paul III. in 1549, when Marcellus was elected, Michael Angelo seems to have been inclined to exchange Rome for Florence, but he changed his plans soon after, on the death of the Pope, and the election of Paul IV. He remained at the head of the works which were begun, and in the following year was obliged to fortify Rome for the Pope, because an attack from the French was feared. When the French army really drew near, Michael Angelo fled into the mountains of Spoleto, where, according to his letter to Vasari, he had a great deal of pleasure, but at the same time great inconvenience and heavy expenses.

To speak of his works might have some significance for me were I writing in Rome or Florence, or for a public who is familiar with those cities ; I am so myself only in a very small degree. But, from Vasari's account alone, he who has no idea of the importance of these cities in themselves, or of their flourishing condition at the time of Michael Angelo, may at least understand that his activity far surpassed the limits within which now a great

painter or architect moves. We might make a sort of comparison between his work and that of a great English engineer of the present day. Now it is the highest aim of architects who build and construct to use material in accordance with its capabilities, and, in grand simplicity, to build enormous structures; but in those days the material received essential modifications from the mind of the builder. Those buildings seem to us like an approach towards a colossal sportiveness. But the time will return when one will work in the same way. Then beauty, splendor, and tasteful grandeur were desirable things. The palaces were adorned with grand façades, the decorations were on an extravagant scale. Cosmo had his whole palace, which had been painted by Vasari, copied to the most minute details, and sent to Rome for Michael Angelo to look at it, and say that it was all right. When the Grand-duke himself came to Rome, he visited Michael Angelo, and had a personal interview, for during the last of his life his extreme age prevented the great man from going to Florence.

Cosmo loved and honored him, although his vanity may have had some share in this. When a prince presented Goethe with an order, when, in our day, Humboldt receives a decoration, the honor is the same on both sides. We have testimony enough of the lofty height upon which Michael Angelo was placed. But envy and hostility dogged his footsteps. Under Paul IV., Piero Ligorio was one of those engaged at work on St. Peter's. He said publicly that Michael Angelo had become childish, and so the latter wished to stop his work and go to Florence. We have a letter written in 1560 to Cardinal di Carpi, in which the gray-haired old man of eighty-six years complains of the remark as implying that he was not doing his duty, and, in the most bitter terms, begs for his discharge. He did not possess the calmness of Goethe, who was always followed by the scorn and envy of incompetent men; but Goethe did not stand upon the plane on which he stood. Goethe represented confidentially, as it were, the German literature and culture of his time, with the air of a man who stands outside of the thing. Michael Angelo represented genuine art as opposed to pope and world, was always occupied by practical work, and was continually surrounded by a circle of new pupils, who were bound to him by love, as he was to them. He knew exactly for himself how high he stood. He had proved

it. The Popes, the Emperor, the King of France, the Sultan, Venice, Florence, all wished to claim him for their own. He always succeeded, but he knew the price which had been paid to give him this place. All art formed around him, and felt in him its centre of life; with the most unselfish love he gave himself up to men; he had the courage, and will, and power to grant what was asked of him. Now, when a few, whom he had surpassed and looked beyond, threw stones in the way of him who had pushed rocks from the path—not to keep him back, but merely to make themselves noticed for a moment—when this made him very indignant for the time, then we find his anger very natural, and in accordance with his fiery, impetuous temper.

I wish to mention two more letters only. In 1556 he writes to Vasari about the death of Urbino, who, when a young man, had entered his service during the hard days of Florence, and had remained with him. Cellini also speaks of him, and of his violent devotion to his master. He mentions this in speaking of the useless mission to Michael Angelo, whom he was to allure to Florence on Cosmo's business. Michael Angelo was overwhelmed with grief at the death of this man. Although he himself was old and weak, he took care of Urbino, and passed whole nights with his clothes on, sitting by the side of his sick-bed.

"I have had him with me for twenty-six years," writes Michael Angelo, "and have found him a man of inestimable fidelity. And now, when I had made him rich, and had hoped to find in him the staff and protector of my old age, the only hope I have left to me is that I shall see him again in Paradise. And God has shown me that this must happen, by means of the blessed death which He let him die, for what troubled him most was not that he should die, but that he must leave me behind in a treacherous world, with so many troubles. The best part of myself has indeed gone with him, and there is nothing left except an endless sorrow."

The other letter is written in the year following to Urbino's widow. She had thought herself very much injured by some of his arrangements, and he wrote to satisfy her. He enters into the details of her household affairs in the simplest manner, and puts himself at her point of view, so that she must understand him. He was godfather to her two sons. He wrote as follows:

"I saw very well that you were angry with me, but I did not know the reason. From your last letter I think I have discovered the cause. When you sent me the cheese, you wrote at the same time that you wanted to send other things, but the handkerchiefs were not yet ready. I, wishing that you should not be at any expense on my account, answered you that you ought not to send me anything more, but rather ask something from me, and in that way give me pleasure, for you might know, and indeed you have proofs of it with you, how much I care still for the blessed Urbino, although he is dead, and how dear to me is everything that belonged to him.

"You wish to come here or to send little Michael Angelo to me ; as to this, I must write you exactly how things are. I cannot indeed, advise you to bring Michael Angelo here, for there is no woman in the house nor even any housekeeping, and as the child is still young some misfortune or difficulty might arise. The Duke of Florence, however, a few months ago, urged very strongly that I should return to Florence, where he offered me the greatest inducements. I asked permission to delay awhile, that I might arrange everything here, and leave the building of St. Peter's in good hands, so I may, perhaps, stay here the whole summer to put all my affairs in order, as also, to put your money here into bonds. In the autumn, then, I shall return to Florence to stay, for I am old, and have no time to come again to Rome. I shall settle matters with you then, and if you will let me have Michael Angelo I will cherish him with a deeper love than even the son of my nephew, Leonardo, and will teach him everything that his father would wish him to know. Yesterday, March 27, I received your last letter."

It is said that his letters are mere jottings, but this one has, most of all of them, unconstrained expression. He wrote just as he thought, one thing after another, without any regularly arranged order. Whenever he intended to express an opinion, he did it simply and in a straightforward manner, often so near the truth that it gave offence to people. He looked very sharply, and judged in the same way that he looked. "It is indeed a pity to see thy piety," he remarked to a sculptor. "Tell thy father that the living figures which he makes are better than the painted ones," was the message sent to Francesco Francia through his son, a beautiful youth. "Titian has a good color, but he can-

not draw," he said without hesitation, when the Venetian was in Rome, and he had visited him. On the other hand, when before the great bronze doors of Ghiberti he exclaimed, "These doors are worthy of being the doors of Paradise." Petty men who strove to rival him were conquered in the most pitiless manner; he treated the greatest and the least with the same harshness that he used towards himself, for he criticised his own works in the most unsparing fashion. All this sharpness of judging might have been counteracted by his noble character, by his unselfishness, by his conscientious disregard of external honor; but there was something more—he spoke the truth not only without reserve, but he often gave to his sentences an ironical meaning; he made men feel that he was superior to them, not only in art but in mind; that no one can forgive. In this way throughout his life he drew upon himself so much hatred. For one who is injured always recurs in his wounded pride to the offending word, and does not consider the meaning of the whole, or whether merely the thing, and not the person, was criticised. And, what was worst of all, his remarks were not witty nonsense that one could forget, but truths which struck a man down. If he said, "You understand nothing of paintings," he destroyed him. He allowed no trifling in his art. When he was painting the Last Judgment, and wanted some of his pupils to help him, he made a division into those who could help him and those who did not know enough. These last he sent off. Finally, he sent them all away together, and painted alone. He had but one thought—that was his work.

Although his character was earnest, although he acknowledged an ideal, and, indeed, carried it so far that he would seldom, if ever, make a portrait, because copying a person seemed to him very poor work—still he had not the nature of a gloomy philosopher. He seems to have shown another side which was quite natural; he took pleasure in singing, violin playing, and gay company, laughed heartily at what was comic, and often in talking used good-natured wit, as well as irony. His character has something quite German in it; he had humor, a word hardly understood by the Romans, which suits him exactly in many respects. In one of his sonnets he describes with quiet amusement how he painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel while lying on his back, and what a comical figure he made. We have a stanza of eight

lines from him, containing an ironical declaration of love, in which he represents, by means of all possible comparisons, how the loved one stays in his heart and cannot come forth. The Rape of Gany-mede is quite naïve, as if some innocent old painter in Germany had painted it. An eagle is bearing the boy aloft, and is already high up in the air, but on the earth sits his faithful dog, who looks up to the sky after him and piteously howls in astonishment and pain. Vasari tells a number of little anecdotes about him, whose only point is in their harmless fancy, and from which we can see very plainly that Michael Angelo led a life that was simple and natural, somewhat like that which one understands by the expression a "real artist life" in Munich or Düsseldorf. But he was, besides, a man who recognized no superior except the Pope, and he treated even him almost like an equal. He might have said, like Diogenes, "Stand aside out of my sunshine," and the one to whom he said it would have stepped aside as if the request were quite a usual one. He always found natures that could understand him.

His century was great and youthful. If we consider his long life, the number and extent of his works, his outward circumstances and his private life, the beginning and the end of his career, then we must say that he appears equipped for a powerful career, and he found a field worthy of his steps, men who loved and understood him, princes who honored and employed him, events by means of which every part of his mind was cultivated. It is a rare good fortune when a great genius lives in such an eventful time; if to-day a man were born with the same talents, with the same eager power, he would find nothing the same that Michael Angelo found it. No one knows, indeed, what will happen and what might happen. If one reasons in this way, one thinks in parallels. We say sometimes, if Beethoven had lived in other times, had met other men, perhaps he would have developed more freely; his depth of soul might not have been greater, but his mind would not have been so often distracted and pained by the poverty of his life. By poverty I do not mean any lack of money. It is a current opinion that the rarity of great geniuses is owing to a mistaken political economy, and that one ought to assist people into geniuses; as if a bullfinch could be changed into a nightingale by good food.

In regard to Beethoven I call it poverty, because he knew no Lorenzo, no Julius, no Vittoria Colonna, because the princes towards whom he turned never responded to him, because his concerts were hardly applauded, while Rossini roused the public to great enthusiasm. The great Michael Angelo, or, as he was generally called, the divine Michael Angelo, experienced no such fate;—his bark never turned into narrow channels, where it must pass with difficulty or might be obliged to remain stationary; he had from the first the wide sea before him, sailed under full canvas, encountered storms, to be sure, but remained always in the open ocean, and passed far ahead of every one that followed in the wake which his keel made as it cut deep through the water.

But one thing was denied to him—the feeling of satisfaction which many a man in poorer circumstances often has in large measure. In spite of all that he received, he felt the emptiness and the vexation of human life; he longed, like all great minds, for that freedom which is granted man only in his youth, before he feels the slavery of existence. Raphael knew nothing of this longing; life was not revealed to him. Heaven and earth met before his eyes, and he walked over the ground as if on clouds. A shadow never rested on the spirit of his creations, even when he was painting something horrible. It appears on the canvas, sharp and horrible, but always like a play or drama, just as the tragedies of Shakespeare always remain mere plays.

On a picture that Marcanton has engraved from a drawing of his, we see the plague, *il morbetto*. Stretched lifeless, with swollen features, a woman is lying on the ground. A naked child has crawled to her, and stretches toward her breast. A man is bending down over her; with one hand he holds his nostrils, with the other he is taking away the child. Behind them a figure is sitting, with head supported on the right hand, while the left one is thrown on top the head—that is all one sees; but it seems as if Death were waiting impatiently. A statue of Mercury separates the picture into two parts: the interior of a house and the street. In the house it is dark, and a man is holding a torch low down to light it up. On the ground are three young calves, lying together, dead. A living one has come near them, smelling around with outstretched head; he drives it away. In the background an old man is stretched out, dying; two nuns are going near him.

I never see the picture without a sort of shudder, but the idealism of the conception prevents any feeling of disgust, although the disgusting is represented. One feels that the artist surmounts everything. He saw or heard of the Plague, in imagination the scenes rose before his eyes, he put them on paper, and what he represented was the truth. Wherever he looks, he sees forms: he commands, they appear to him, and he paints them. Happiness and beauty, splendor and luxury surrounded him; that is the air which breathes around his works; but, besides, he represented the most mournful and frightful. He did not work like Michael Angelo on stern forms in whose very smiles there was that deep melancholy which spoke to the artist's heart of the lost freedom of his fatherland.

Both together, they represent their century: Raphael, the youthful courage, the abundance, the sunny springtime of its life; Michael Angelo, the gloomy thoughts which slumbered under all, the dark powers which, warmed in the depths of the earth, at first merely made the gardens above bloom, but gradually burned them to a barren waste. Raphael lived, as it were, on horseback, and died before the death of the roses whose fragrance intoxicated him. Michael Angelo went on foot with republican simplicity through his ninety years. Both were great men; whoever sees their works and hears of their lives, feels himself even to-day warmed by the fire of their souls and consoled by their happiness and misfortunes.

The story is that Michael Angelo was almost blind in his last years; that he caused himself to be led to his works that he might feel them with his hands. But, long before, he had written a sonnet in which he says that neither painting nor carving in marble gives him any satisfaction now; that to be happy he must remain absorbed in the thought of Divine things. Here are verses by him, in which his thoughts become a prayer in the translation of J. A. Symonds.

“ Oh, make me see Thee, Lord, where'er I go !
If mortal beauty sets my soul on fire,
That flame when near to Thine must needs expire,
And I with love of only Thee shall glow.
Dear Lord, Thy help I seek against this woe,
These torments that my spirit vex and tire ;

Thou only with new strength canst reinspire
My will, my sense, my courage faint and low.
Thou gavest me on earth this soul divine;
And Thou within this body weak and frail
Didst prison it—how sadly there to live!
How can I make its lot less vile than mine?
Without Thee, Lord, all goodness seems to fail.
To alter Fate is God's prerogative."

He died in Rome in 1564. His will was very concise. "I leave my soul to God, my body to the earth, and my property to my nearest relatives." In his house in Florence is preserved a letter, in which Daniel da Volterra writes to Michael Angelo's nephew that he must come to Rome as soon as convenient. In a postscript he begs him to lose no time, but travel directly through. Michael Angelo himself has written his name below, although, on account of trembling, he could not finish the Buonarotti.

He died on February 17. His body was taken to Florence, and buried there with ceremony. Vasari was commissioned to design his monument. He lies in Santa Croce, where, near him, are the monuments of Dante, Macchiavelli, Galileo, and Alfieri. The year in which he died was that of Shakespeare's birth.